



Tudeley: the Chagall Windows, a jewel of Kent Tunbridge Wells to Tonbridge

Distance: 16½ km=10 miles or 10½ km=6½ miles easy walking

Region: Kent

Date written: 23-mar-2014

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Last update: 6-feb-2022

Refreshments: Tunbridge Wells, Pembury, Tonbridge, Tudeley

Map: Explorer 136 (High Weald) *hopefully not needed*

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Artistic and historical features, wide-ranging views, woods and wild flowers

In Brief

The modest little church of Tudeley draws visitors from all ends of the earth to see its wonderful stained-glass windows, all twelve of which were decorated by the painter Marc Chagall. The windows, which span three sides, fill the interior with blue and golden light and are at their best on a sunny day. The church is open to the public every day except during a service, wedding, etc. So you should check the calendar at www.tudeley.org/allsaintstudeley.htm before you set out, to make sure that the church will be open.

This linear walk goes from **Tunbridge Wells to Tonbridge** via Tudeley Church, with a quick easy link by frequent public transport. Paths and tracks are well-signed and easy to follow. There are long stretches of tarmac, mostly very quiet cul-de-sac lanes and driveways, making this walk *excellent in the wetter seasons*. Gradients are gentle, and the muddy patches are rare and generally can be bypassed, so sturdy walking shoes are adequate. There is only *one easy stile*.

There is a “temporary path closure” affecting this walk but an alternative is available. See the sections immediately after the Chapel.

There is a shorter alternative beginning in **Tunbridge Wells Hospital**, which requires a short bus journey by frequent service from Tonbridge, daily including Sunday.

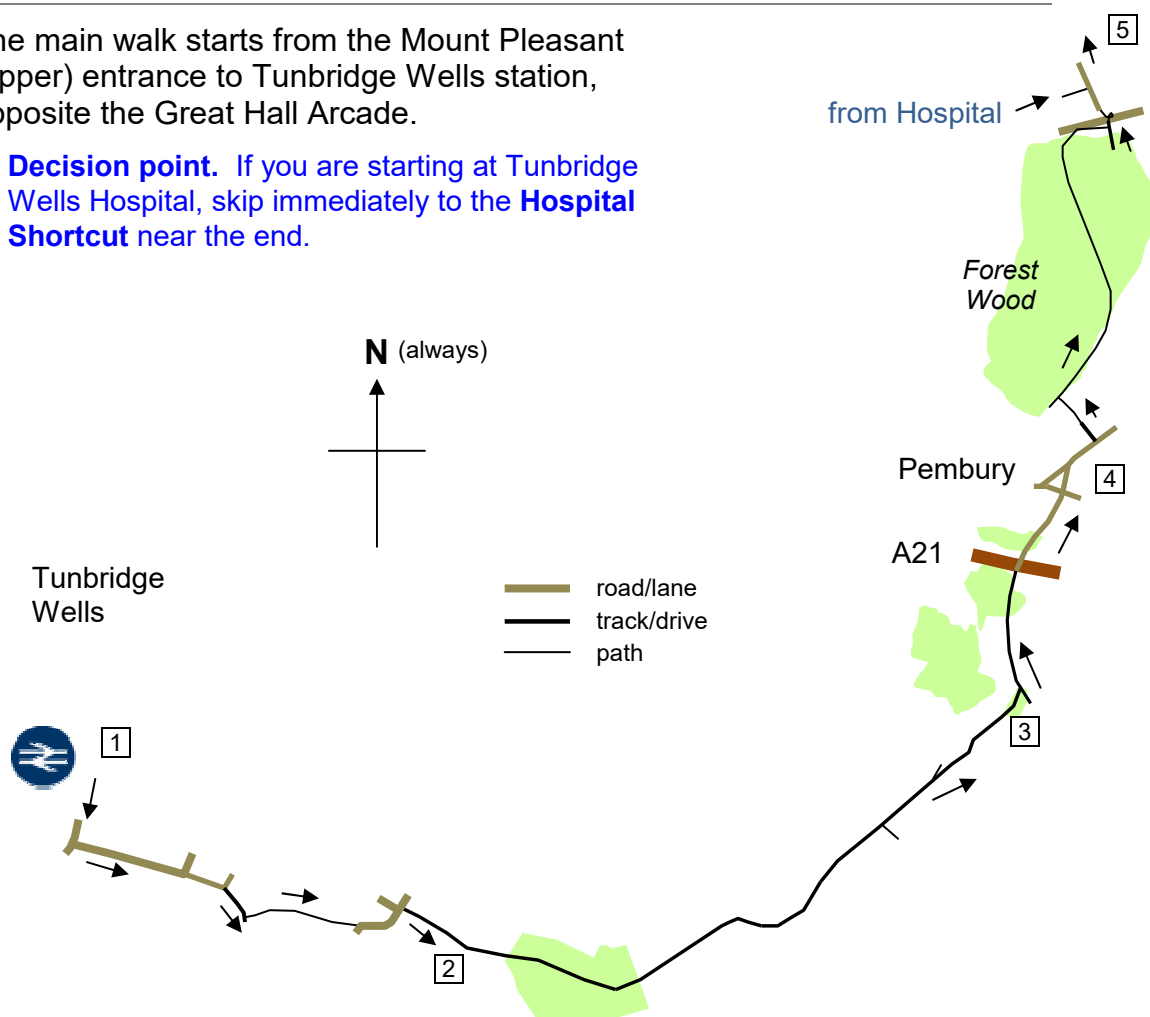
The **full walk** begins at **Tunbridge Wells station**, postcode **TN1 1QQ**. You can also start at **Tonbridge**, doing the railway or bus journey first. If you are coming by car, it is also a good plan to park somewhere in the middle, such as **Pembury Green**, postcode **TN2 4PH**, doing the short hop by train or bus as a mid-walk break. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

The main walk starts from the Mount Pleasant (upper) entrance to Tunbridge Wells station, opposite the Great Hall Arcade.

Decision point. If you are starting at Tunbridge Wells Hospital, skip immediately to the **Hospital Shortcut** near the end.



- 1** Turn **right** towards a mini roundabout and cross at the pelican crossing to Hoopers store. At the mini roundabout, turn **left** up Grove Hill Road. Where the main road bends left, continue straight on up Camden Hill and then into Camden Park. Keep straight ahead and, at the bottom of the hill, bear **left** on a tarmac path opposite *Chafford House* (signed *Tunbridge Wells circular walk*). When you emerge onto a lane, continue in the same direction. At the main road, bear **left**, follow it round to the left past a convenience store, then cross the road at the traffic island and continue on into Halls Hole Road, and almost immediately turn **right** into High Woods Lane.
- 2** At the end there is a gate marked *Private Road Access to Bowls Club*. You will follow this metalled lane for the next two miles. The lane soon passes through High Wood, a coppiced bluebell wood. Ignore all side paths. After the wood there are lovely views to left and to the right as far as Bedgebury Forest with the big phone mast (*see the Bedgebury Forest walk in this series*). In late summer the hedgerow offers a feast of blackberries. Ignore a track on the right, pass through a farm and then go past some cottages and a small house. Immediately after these the lane degrades to a hardcore farm track and meets a junction of paths by a hedge. Walk to the **right** of the hedge and follow a wide rough path curving down the left-hand side of the field.



- 3 At the end of the field go into a wood and turn **left**, crossing a bridge. Soon you reach a T-junction with another track. Turn **left** uphill, thus leaving the Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk. Continue on this lane passing farms and cross the A21 road on a bridge. Continue straight on into Pembury village. At the traffic lights, cross the road and continue in the same direction with the village green on your left.

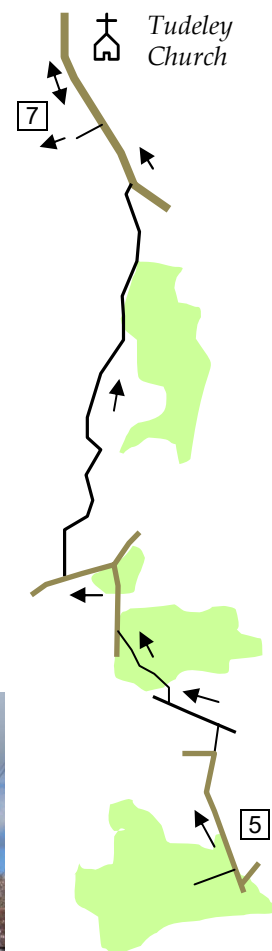
This is a nice spot for a break on one of the benches. You can admire the village sign which shows the old stagecoach which passed through on the way to Hastings. The "Camden Arms" on the green serves food all day. To the left is another pub with good food, the "Black Horse".

- 4 Continue straight over beside the green on the one-way Lower Green Road for nearly 300m to take a signed footpath **left** pointing to (another!) Bowls Club. Walk up the short drive and continue on the enclosed footpath. Pass a redundant swing-gate to enter Forest Wood. Turn **right** on a wide path and continue on this path just inside the wood, ignoring all side paths, going over a flat bridge, later avoiding a left fork into the wood. After some distance, the path becomes enclosed by chain link fencing and, after more than 1 km in total, the path turns right uphill, parallel to the Pembury Bypass road, the A228. When you meet an old lane, turn sharp **left** to cross the bypass by a bridge. Continue down a spiral path, then turn **right** to Old Church Lane, soon passing the waterworks on your right.

Here the Hospital Shortcut joins the main walk.

- 5 Continue up Old Church Lane towards Pembury Old Church. Enter the churchyard and **bear left** in front of the church (which is worth visiting when open), exiting by a swing-gate. Turn **left** along a metal drive for about 100m to the corner of a wood. Turn **right** here on a well-signed and easily followed path, through a bluebell wood, passing an unneeded stile. When you emerge onto a quiet lane turn **right**. In 200m turn **left** at a T-junction [2016: ignoring a road closed sign].

- 6 Immediately past *Knowles Bank Lodge*, turn **right** between brick pillars into the driveway of *Knowles Bank*, which is a public footpath. Follow this primrose-lined drive, passing two ponds and having good views across the Medway valley towards the Greensand ridge, and of the gardens of Knowles Bank. (2016: The route here was recently diverted as the notice indicates.) 30m before a large gate, turn **left** over a stile. The path winds through woodland, with one or two yellow market posts, taking you to the left of *Knowles Bank* house. It then emerges into a large sloping field. Turn diagonally **right**, heading for a paddock fence splitting two fields with farm buildings further behind. Now cross the paddock behind the first fence to arrive at a second fence and turn **left** onto a "green lane". You will follow this wide path for 750m, through a large metal gate, on a rougher course through trees, then on grass again, always with more lovely views. On reaching a grassy meadow, your path goes left through a metal gate and resumes direction down the





right-hand side. The last section may be muddy, but you can easily divert into a meadow on the left, then rejoin the path just before reaching the road. Cross the road and turn **left**, passing cottages and an Indian restaurant. Look for a signed footpath on the left-hand side of the road next to cottages (this will be your continued route after you have seen the church). Turn **left** at the footpath sign and immediately **right** on a permissive footpath. This path, popular with dog walkers, goes along the edge of two fields. In 300m or so, turn **right** to reach the road opposite Tudeley Church.

Tudeley Church is the local church for the nearby estate of Somerhill. This was occupied from 1849 by the Jewish Goldsmid family. In the 20th century, Sir Henry d'Avigdor-Goldsmid married an Anglican and their children were brought up as Christians. In 1963 their daughter Sarah, aged 21, was drowned in a sailing accident. Two years earlier, she had admired the stained glass windows created by Marc Chagall for a synagogue in Jerusalem. The family decided to commission windows for this church in her memory. There are many subtle motifs in his windows, and it is worth taking some time to study them.

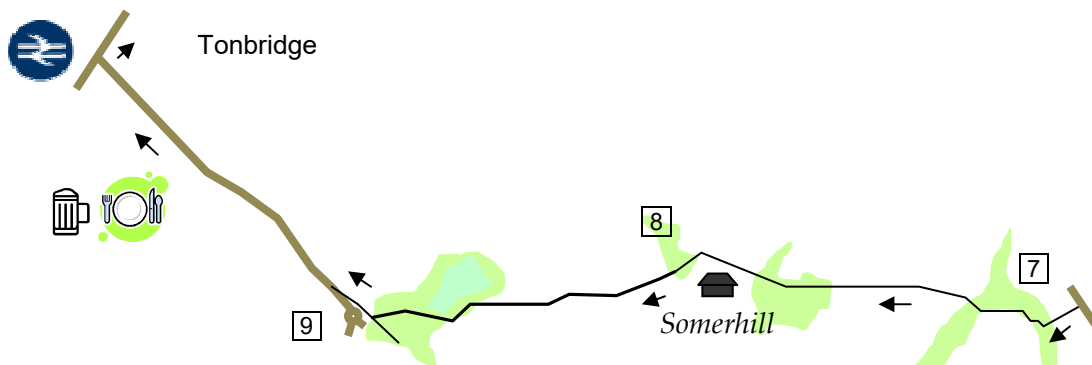
Marc Chagall, 1887-1985, was a Jewish modernist artist, born in Russia, now Belarus, some of whose paintings inspired the name of the musical "Fiddler on the Roof". See Wikipedia or e.g. www.marcchagallart.net/ for more on his life and work.



The *Poacher and Partridge* gastropub in Tudeley is 750m further along the road. From there, you can return the way you came or take a footpath on the **left** just before the pub and use your map to re-join the route near Tonbridge.

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There have been problems at Somerhill at the end of this section, hopefully resolved, but please read the section called "Somerhill" at the end of this guide. Retrace your steps, along the permissive path you used before, to reach the signed footpath. Turn **right** here along a green track through a cultivated crop field, down into woods. Cross a stream by a bridge with rails and go over a small bridge into a meadow. Turn **right** along the edge of the meadow. At the second corner, turn **right** through a wide gap, away from the three oasts visible on your left, to join a driveway. Continue uphill on the drive with the large black-and-white Park Farm house beyond a field to your left. Cross a tarmac drive and continue straight ahead, across the centre of a field, through a small wooden gate and then to the right of a metal fence in woodland. You pass a brick pillbox on your right, just visible through the fence, before you enter a section between low walls.



The house was occupied by the army during the 1940s and these pillboxes were built during WWII as a defence against possible invasion.

- 8 At the end of the walled section, veer **left** on a drive and continue past a bus shelter.

Behind you to the left you will see part of Somerhill. This was the home of the D'Avigdor-Goldsmids and is now private schools. Built in the early 17th century and extended by the Goldsmid family, it is the second largest house in Kent (after Knole – see the Knole and Ightham walk in this series).

When the drive bends back to the right, continue straight on over a narrow zebra crossing and through a meadow, bearing very slightly right on a grassy path between trees, following signs. Continue under oak trees until you join another drive, via an optional wooden bridge. Turn **right** on the drive. Continue on past a lake, a stone cottage and a bridge, to emerge eventually through a metal gate onto the road at North Lodge.



- 9 Turn **right** to cross Woodgate Way into Pembury Road. [The Vauxhall Inn is on your left.](#) [There are buses from near here that will take you into Tonbridge centre.](#) Continue along the Pembury Road, using the tarmac footway, initially uphill, then downhill, for over 1 km, passing Tudeley Lane and Goldsmid Road, and the *Primrose* and *Somerhill* pubs. The quirky “P & J” (*Punch and Judy*) pub is down a side road on the right. At the roundabout at the bottom, turn **right**, cross the road at the pelican crossing, then continue on, crossing Waterloo Road, to reach Tonbridge station.



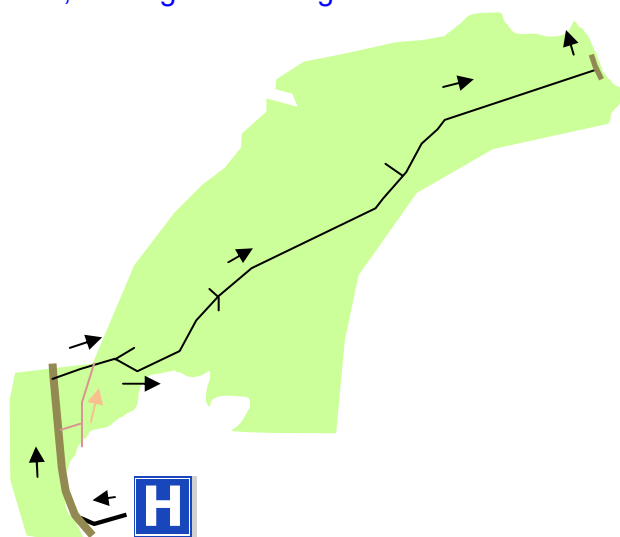
There are plenty of places for refreshment in Tonbridge High Street: highly recommended is Finch House Café, just north of the railway bridge on the right hand side, near Boots.

[You can travel back to Tunbridge Wells from Tonbridge by train or bus, but train is quicker and you pass through the lovely Southborough Valley and over the viaduct \(see the *Southborough Valley* walk in this series\).](#) The bus leaves from the opposite side of the road to the station.

Hospital Shortcut

[Take this option if you decide to do the shorter walk, starting at Tunbridge Wells Hospital.](#)

The bus will drive into the hospital grounds. Get off here and return to the main road. Cross it carefully and turn **right** using the pavement on the other side. [\(The orange lines in the mini-map show an old short cut through the woods which is now thought to be impractical.\)](#) In 250m, before an overhead power line, cross the road again and turn **right** onto a wide track. Follow this track as it winds uphill, avoiding all side paths, gradually leaving the noise of the road behind. After 120m, at a clear fork, take the **right**-hand option, a fainter track, by a stone



footpath marker. The path passes the edge of a metal fence and then veers away from it. After 250m, you reach a complex junction of forestry paths. Keep straight ahead and take a narrow path ahead, as indicated by a post with a black arrow. You are now on a pleasant sandy path through coppiced woodland, well signed with more wooden posts and black arrows. After 600m, you enter a more open area: keep straight ahead. The last 500m has been used by forestry vehicles and you may need to use a path just inside woodland on the left. Emerge onto Old Church Lane by the waterworks and turn **left**, to join the main walk at section [5](#).



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Getting there

For the main walk:

By train or bus: begin the walk at **Tunbridge Wells railway station**.

By car: if coming to **Tonbridge**, take the A21 and come off at a sign for *Southborough, Tunbridge Wells*. Keep in the right hand lane and branch off to the **right**, again keeping in the right hand lane at the lights. Turn **right** to cross the A21 on a viaduct and continue to the bottom of Quarry Hill. Go straight on at the first roundabout and then **right** at the next. This is Pembury Road. Drive to the top and, just after the Hand Car Wash, turn **left** and park either in Goldsmid Road, or the next left, Tudeley Lane. You can catch the bus from the corner of Goldsmid Road. You can also park further down Pembury Road, over the brow of the hill, on the left. Parking may be harder on weekdays. Parking in Pembury Road is free on Sunday (2014). Take the train, or any one of numerous buses to **Tunbridge Wells station**.

If parking in **Pembury**, take the A21, *ignore* all turn offs for *Pembury Walks* and the Hospital and take the exit for *Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone, Pembury*. Follow signs for Pembury and park by the village green and begin the walk at section [4](#).

For the Hospital Shortcut:

By train and bus: the bus stop for the Hospital is on the opposite side of the road from **Tonbridge Station**, diagonally opposite Lidl supermarket. Buses 216 and 217 go to the Hospital, including Sunday but, note: not all buses marked *Tunbridge Wells*, go to the Hospital.

Somerhill

There have been intermittent problems affecting the footpath through Somerhill in recent years (2016 to 2021).

July 2016: there was a “temporary footpath closure” for about six months whilst repairs were done to stone walls on the sunken path section. Local people were observed coming through the closed section which they declared to be passable, after squeezing through a couple of metal fence panels. Later, where they would normally go through the locked metal gate at North Lodge, they climbed over a low stone wall to the left of the gate which was no more difficult than a stile. This may have changed.

2020: the school put up signs and a rope to prevent visitors straying. (Apparently, local people were using the grounds “like a public park”.) A school spokesperson declared that the public footpath was part of the Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk and that **nothing had changed** (even despite the “lockdown” of 2020).

Summer 2021: walkers reported that the path was “blocked with a huge metal gate” and locals concurred that there was “no end in sight”. It’s not certain whether a diversion was missed and/or how long this situation will endure. The warning sign appears only shortly before the grounds of the school, giving ramblers no option but to return to the main road, so it cannot be instigated by Kent C.C. and is technically illegal (if there really is no other way).

An alternative for walkers eager for refreshment is to continue past Tudeley church to the *Poacher and Partridge*, take a footpath on the **left** opposite the pub, and use the Explorer 136 map to navigate back to Tonbridge.

Another option is, to turn **right** after visiting the church back onto the road: walk along it, then turn **left** onto the B2017. Shortly before a group of houses on the right (and a drive to Summerhill a bit further along on the left), take a signed footpath off to the **right**. It crosses the railway line (careful!), immediately turns **left**, then runs alongside to it for approx 750m to a T-junction. There are then two options:

Option (1): turn **left** to re-emerge onto the B2017 and turn **right** on it. (It is possible to use the field on your right, on the other side of the hedge, walking parallel to the road, exiting through a gap in the hedge at the bottom next to the roundabout, thus avoiding the hazards of a busy road with no verge or footway.) At the roundabout, take the extension of Tudeley Lane (i.e. avoiding the A26 on both sides). It is a land of car franchises. This road is blocked in the middle and has a pavement so it is quite quiet. Continue along this road until you reach the Weald of Kent school where there are buses to the station (very busy at the end of school). Otherwise reach a T junction with the A2014, Pembury Road, turn right and follow it into Tonbridge to a roundabout where you turn right onto the High Street and the station (which is also signposted).

Option (2): turn **right** at the above-mentioned T-junction and follow the lane until it turns left into Postern Lane; this (unresearched) route appears to reach the Medway by the A26, pass under the road then emerge at the High Street. From here you would turn **left** for the station.